



Area Mission Partnership launched at Down Cathedral for Lecale

The Year of Mission has begun with the launch of the new Lecale Area Mission Partnership (LAMP) in Down Cathedral. Bishop Harold commissioned the ministry team and parishioners at an early evening service on 4 January, so launching a new phase of ministry in this beautiful and largely rural part of the diocese.

Bishop Harold in his address reminded the congregation that “mission is everything which God in Christ has sent us to do,” and it is with this in mind that LAMP begins its ministry. The acronym, whilst accurately naming the partnership, also reflects a desire to be a light in the district. There are plans to build up the spiritual life of the churches, developing pastoral care, worship and prayer ministry and to be more effective in outreach.



***The current LAMP Ministry Team with the Bishop L-R
Front row: Dean Henry Hull, Bishop Harold Miller, Revd
Stuart Burns, Canon Cecil Wilson and Mr Albert Colmer
Back row: Revd Graham Savidge, Revd John Scott, Mr
Terence McNeilly and Revd Michael Houston.***

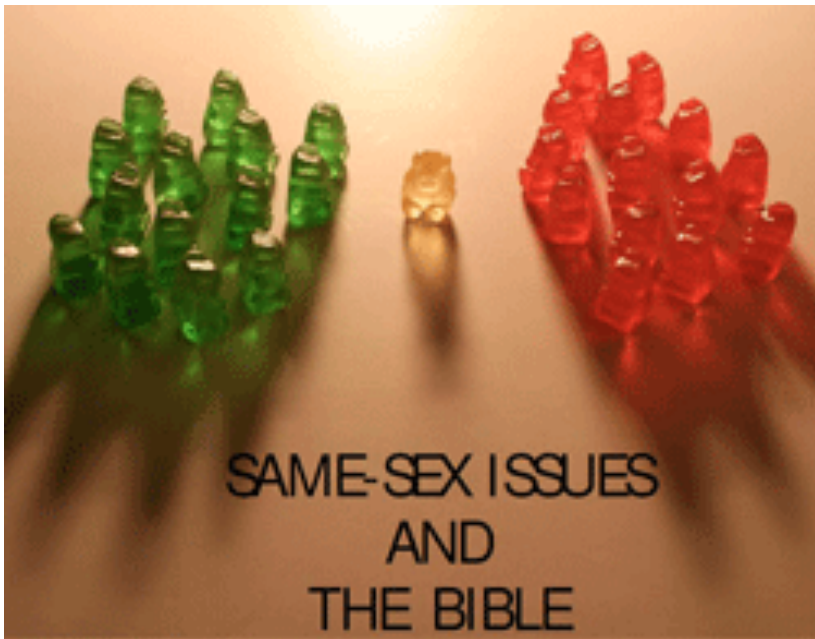
LAMP is a mission grouping of 14 churches in the Lecale district led by Dean Henry Hull and Revd Stuart Burns. The 14 churches are drawn from 3 parish groups – Lecale, Down and Bright, Ballee, Killough and Rathmullan – which currently minister to 542 households. The Partnership will more effectively resource and strategise mission in the area which fans out from Downpatrick to Seaforde and out along the coast to Ardglass and Tyrella.

A key goal is to develop a strategy for youth and children's work, and specifically to employ a youth or family worker based in an office/ drop-in centre in Downpatrick. Last year Down Parish purchased a flat with 3 meeting rooms next to the parish hall. The property needs total refurbishment and it's hoped that the funding applications already in train will help to complete the work in 2015.

The Lecale Area has a rich spiritual heritage, centred around, but not exclusive to, Down Cathedral and Saul. There are plans to expand the cathedral tour programme, to develop the Saul experience and to create a pilgrimage trail round the Lecale churches. These are all

opportunities to serve and engage with tourists, pilgrims and visitors to the area.

Archbishops commend C of I publication on same-sex issues



The Archbishop of Armagh and the Archbishop of Dublin have commended a new publication
"Same–Sex Issues and the Bible"

"Same–Sex Issues and the Bible" Is a 5–part series of Bible Studies for Lent 2015 put together by BACI (the Biblical Association for the Church

of Ireland) with a view to bringing the Church's discussion and discernment process on these issues to everyday Christians in the Church of Ireland.

The series has been carefully designed to take note of recent biblical thinking in this area and to offer both traditionalist and more modern ways of considering the key texts. It demands no theological expertise of participants, but does invite groups to ponder the theological, biblical and sociological questions in a non-academic fashion. It is hoped that it will enable participants to think over the issues prayerfully with respect both for the biblical texts, for one another and for those whose lives are affected by the debate.

The sessions are as follows:

1. The Teaching of Jesus – extracts from Matthew's Gospel.
2. The Prohibitions of Leviticus.
3. Implications from the Creation Narratives.
4. Paul's teaching on unnatural or depraved sexuality. (Romans 1)
5. Sin lists, condemnation, exemption and redemption. (Other Pauline texts with Acts 10–11.)

The BACI team – on this occasion Canon Ginnie Kennerley, Dr William Olhausen and ordinand David Compton – hope that this opportunity for people of differing views to study Scripture and meditate together on the issues will assist in the ongoing discernment process in the Church of Ireland. The 36–page booklet can be downloaded from

www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com and copies can also be purchased from Best Sellers (The Bible Society) or Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, for €1.50 or £8 for six copies, and from The Book Well (postage included) and St Anne’s Cathedral Belfast for £1.60.

The Bible Study series has been commended by both patrons of BACI, the Archbishop of Armagh and the Archbishop of Dublin:

Archbishop Richard Clarke says: ‘As one of the patrons of BACI, I am happy to commend this latest series of Bible studies to the membership of the Church of Ireland. Although the entire area of human sexuality in the context of Christian belief is deeply contentious for many people (and from many different perspectives), it surely behoves every Christian disciple to listen with genuine respect to viewpoints other than their

own, but which are nevertheless held in conscience by fellow Christians. My true hope is that these studies may enable a process of respectful and spiritual mutual listening to continue and, with God's guidance and blessing, to bring us unitedly closer to His will for all his people.'

Archbishop Michael Jackson says: 'Having been invited to commend this volume produced by BACI for Lent 2015, I am willing and happy to do so. My hope and prayer are that the Studies contained within it will contribute to the enlargement of the attentive listening on which we are currently engaged across the Church of Ireland in the area of human sexuality in the context of Christian belief. Both the subject and its content have long aroused significant energy and vigorous argument on the part of many people. My hope and prayer would be that attentive listening might bear the fruit of respectful hearing.'

**Parents back the transfer test
system Education Minister John
O'Dowd wants to axe**



Families view unofficial exams as best route to grammar place

Belfast Telegraph - Parental support for Northern Ireland's unregulated transfer test system is showing no signs of wavering - with competition for a grammar school place as keen as ever.

A Belfast Telegraph examination of the grades or scores accepted by grammar schools still using academic selection, against Department of Education wishes, has found that the system is becoming widely accepted and more sophisticated.

The informal transfer tests currently being used sprung up after the abolition of the 11-plus which grammar schools used to select pupils based on their ability.

Despite the Education Minister John O'Dowd's attempts to make academic selection a thing of the past, the two tests - known as GL and AQE Common Entrance Assessment- are still getting high levels of support from parents and the schools which use them.

The Belfast Telegraph breakdown found that three out of four pupils gaining entrance into grammar schools which use academic selection are doing so after achieving top scores in the unregulated tests.

Of all the grades accepted by schools in the Post Primary Transfer Consortium (PPTC), which administers the GL Assessment, 74% were A or the score equivalent.

Meanwhile, 77% of pupils in schools favouring the Association for Quality Education (AQE), which runs the Common Entrance Assessment, scored 100 or over. The findings are based on information provided by 67 post primary schools

in response to a Freedom of Information request by this newspaper.

Tables outlining what scores every selective school accepted for their 2014/15 intake will be published in tomorrow's Belfast Telegraph. Data relates to the scores grammar and partially selective schools accepted for their current Year 8 intake who sat the assessments in autumn 2013.

It also shows a trend of improvement as the private tests, which remain popular with parents, bed in after six years.

Principals of schools operating the two tests said that parents have confidence in them, despite efforts by John O'Dowd to undermine academic selection. Tom Skelton, head of Dalriada School in Ballymoney, said: "We find the AQE test to be a robust method of selection which has the unanimous approval of parents in favour of academic selection."

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/parents-back-the-transfer-test-system-education-minister-john-odowd-wants-to-axe-30881716.html>

Maze hunger strike: Catholic Prison chaplain absolved Government of blame



Monsignor Tom Toner thought the Government had stuck to their word

A Roman Catholic chaplain at the Maze Prison secretly told the Secretary of State that the IRA's main justification for its 1981 hunger strike was entirely wrong, a declassified Government file has revealed.

News Letter - The IRA had called off a hunger strike in 1980 after the Government issued a 30-page document setting out an offer to the prisoners.

But just months later, the IRA claimed that the Government had gone back on its word and said that it would begin a second fast, in which 10 prisoners would starve themselves to death.

However, that account is challenged by one of the few outside figures to have sustained contact with prisoners over the period. A stray document from 1981 included in a file which did not close until 1986 contains the clear and repeatedly stated view of Monsignor Tom Toner that the Government had not gone back on its word.

The implication – though it is not spelt out in the document – is that the second hunger strike was begun on a false premise.

The comments came in a meeting between the Secretary of State, three senior NIO officials and three Catholic representatives – Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich, Fr Toner and Fr Murphy – on 18 February (10 days before the hunger strike began) in Hillsborough Castle.

A confidential note of the meeting said that prior to the meeting Cardinal O’Fiaich “emphasised ... that it was most important that the fact that the meeting was taking place should not be disclosed. At the beginning of the meeting he and the two chaplains emphasised this point, Father Toner commenting that it would adversely affect their relationship with the prisoners, who would even be annoyed that the prison chaplains had discussed the hunger strike with the Cardinal, let alone with the Secretary of State.”

Fr Toner – who died in 2012 – told the Secretary of State that the atmosphere in the prison was “frightening”. The minutes say: “There appeared to be a determination to have a ‘sacrifice’.

“The prisoner’s [sic] attitude was that the Government did nothing following the end of the hunger strike, though Father Toner himself acknowledged that the Government had done what they had undertaken to do.

“The attitude of the prisoners was more extreme than on the previous occasion. They did not really expect to succeed, although privately they probably had some faint hope that they might.”

The minutes continue: “The Cardinal explained that in that context, he thought the intransigence of Sands as the leader of the hunger strike might not be typical of the rest.

“He therefore wondered whether the prisoners could be permitted to meet together to discuss what they were setting out on.”

The minutes also show that the Catholic chaplains openly disagreed with their Cardinal in the meeting, with Cardinal O’Fiaich suggesting that the prisoners be allowed to meet together to discuss what they were setting out on, but the priests saying they did not believe that could stop the impending action.

Later in the meeting, Fr Toner again indicated his belief that the Government had acted appropriately.

He said that from the prisoners’ point of view, they needed some concession from the Government in order to call off their ‘dirty protest’ but the minutes add: “That was how the prisoners saw it; he for his part acknowledged that the Government had complied with their undertakings, and had treated the prisoners reasonably.

“It was noteworthy that the seven who had been on hunger strike had, in Father Toner’s view, been affected by the humane and considerate treatment which they received while in the prison hospital.”

After the meeting, Fr Toner spoke privately to an NIO official and was “gloomy” about the future in the prison.

“He believed that Sands had deliberately put himself in a position where he would be under maximum pressure to continue his fast to death, and he believed he would do so.

“Father Toner for his part recognised that the Government’s position had been very clearly set out, and he quite understood why they could not shift from it.”

Order of nuns acknowledges abuse in Belfast homes

A Catholic religious order has accepted that a notorious paedophile priest abused children while they were in the care of nuns in Northern Ireland, a lawyer told a public inquiry.



Paedophile priest Brendan Smyth was active in the homes, a lawyer said

Belfast Telegraph - Fr Brendan Smyth visited two south Belfast residential homes at the centre of the independent probe into wrongdoing stretching back decades. The serial molester was later convicted of dozens of child abuse charges.

More than 100 witnesses from Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge have come forward to the Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) Inquiry, headed by a former judge, which is one of the largest investigations of its kind ever held in the UK.

Senior counsel to the inquiry Christine Smith QC said: "Sexual abuse of children was perpetrated by the now notorious Fr Brendan Smyth."

She added: "There will be evidence given in this module that he abused children both in Nazareth House and in Nazareth Lodge in Belfast."

Sister Brenda McCall, a senior figure in the Sisters of Nazareth order which ran the now closed Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge in South Belfast, gave a statement to the inquiry.

Ms Smith said: "She states that the congregation accepts that Brendan Smyth did abuse children while they were in our care and continued to abuse some after they left our care.

"She also accepts that he visited both Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge."

Smyth was at the heart of one of the first paedophile priest scandals to envelope the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland.

The cleric was ultimately convicted of dozens of offences against children over a 40-year period.

Outside the hearing Amnesty International's Northern Ireland director Patrick Corrigan said: "It has already been established that among the abusers was notorious serial paedophile Father Brendan Smyth, who was allowed to use both

children's homes as a personal playground for his depravity.

More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/order-of-nuns-acknowledges-abuse-30882669.html>

Presbyterian Moderator sends best wishes to Maud Kells - 75-year-old NI missionary “stable” after being shot in DR Congo

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Right Rev. Dr. Michael Barry has said in a statement:

"I was shocked and saddened to hear the news about Maud Kells and the incident in Congo in which she was shot and wounded.

"Maud is a lifelong member of Molesworth Presbyterian Church in Cookstown and

has served abroad with WEC International mission agency for an incredible 46 years.

"On behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, I extend my best wishes to Maud and will, like many others in the Presbyterian Church, be praying she makes a speedy recovery from this terrible incident."



BBC - A missionary from County Tyrone, who received an OBE in the New Year Honours List, has been shot and wounded in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Maud Kells, who is 75 and from Cookstown, was shot twice in the shoulder by bandits at her home in Mulita in the north east of the DRC.

She is said to be in a stable condition in hospital.

Ms Kells has served in the African country since 1968, working initially as a missionary nurse.

She has been involved in the training of Congolese nurses in five hospitals and 30 health centres.

Ms Kells also engages in bible school teaching, supervision of construction projects and speaking at church services.

Trained as a nurse in Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, she currently serves with the WEC International mission agency.

She spends half of the year in the Congo and the other half at home in Cookstown.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-30690428>

[www.thejournal.ie/tyrone-missionary-1866586-Jan2015?
utm_source=twitter_self](http://www.thejournal.ie/tyrone-missionary-1866586-Jan2015?utm_source=twitter_self)

Shot Ulster missionary saved by 'Hand of God'

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/shot-ulster-missionary-saved-by-hand-of-god-1-6504323>

First new church in a century to be built in Turkey



Francis met Syriac Christians during his recent visit to Turkey

Turkey's government has given the go ahead for the building of the first new church in the country for nearly a century.

The Syriac Orthodox church will be built in Yeşilköy on the outskirts of Istanbul, in an area which already has Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Catholic churches.

The announcement was made last Friday, after Turkey's prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu met Turkey's religious leaders.

He told Turkish media: "It is the first [new church] since the creation of the republic [in 1923]. Churches have been restored and reopened to the public, but no new church has been built until now."

Turkey's ruling party Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been accused of Islamising the country, with the country's 100,000 strong Christian minority talking of an increasingly intolerant atmosphere.

However the party are in some ways more tolerant to Christianity than Turkish republicans who tend to be hostile to all religious expression.

Before the outbreak of the First World War Turkey had a big Christian population and Constantinople a Christian majority, but large numbers of Armenians, Greeks and Syriac Christians were murdered or driven out in the conflict. Since then the surviving Christians have faced discrimination.

But last Friday the prime minister insisted that AKP “does not discriminate between our citizens... the principle of equal citizenship continues to be our characteristic trait”.

The country’s 20,000 Syriac population, mostly in the south-east of the country, has now been swollen by large numbers of refugees fleeing from Syria and Iraq. The \$1.5m cost of the new Virgin Mary Church is being met by the Syriac community.

Francis: ‘The Three Wise Men are models of conversion’

Pope delivers homily during Mass to mark the feast of the Epiphany

In every age and in every culture, people seek God just as the Three Kings did and, in every age, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they find him in the surprising humility of a baby born in a manger, Pope Francis said.

“Led by the Spirit, they come to realise that God’s criteria are quite different from those of men, that God does not manifest himself in the power of this world, but speaks to us in the humbleness of his love,” the Pope said yesterday during a service to mark the feast of the Epiphany.



Pope Francis arrives to celebrate Mass on the feast of the Epiphany in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican

Before beginning the Mass in St Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis and two families — each with two small children — paid homage to the newborn Lord by kissing a

statue of Baby Jesus that had been placed in front of the main altar on Christmas Eve.

The journey of the Magi from the East and their discovery of the babe, the Pope said in his homily, is a sign that Jesus came to save all peoples, not just his fellow Jews.

“According to tradition, the wise men were sages, watchers of the constellations, observers of the heavens in a cultural and religious context which saw the stars as having significance and power over human affairs,” the Pope told the congregation. “The wise men represent men and woman who seek God in the world’s religions and philosophies: an unending quest.”

The Holy Spirit prompted them to follow the star, kept them strong when their quest proved difficult and filled them with the grace they needed “to have a personal encounter with the true God,” he said.

While it would have been understandable to not believe that the baby was the Messiah, the Holy Spirit helped them “enter into the mystery,” the Pope said. “The Wise Men are thus models of conversion to the true faith, since they believed more in the goodness of God than in the apparent splendour of power.”

The feast of the Epiphany, he said, is a time for all Christians to ask themselves where God can be found in their lives and whether they resist the temptation to put their faith in people or things that demonstrate worldly power.

“The crib points us to a different path from the one cherished by the thinking of this world,” Pope Francis said. “It is the path of God’s self-abasement, his glory concealed in the manger of Bethlehem, on the cross upon Calvary, in each of our suffering brothers and sisters.”

While Pope Francis and thousands of people were at Mass in St Peter's Basilica, thousands more lined the main boulevard leading to St Peter's Square for the traditional, folkloric Epiphany celebration. Marching bands, baton twirlers and more than 1,500 people in Renaissance costumes paraded up the street ahead of the Three Kings on horseback.

Vatican police said there were 50,000 people were in the square to recite the Angelus at midday with the Pope.

The revelation of Jesus to the Three Kings, the Pope said at the Angelus, was the "manifestation of God's love and universal salvation. He does not reserve his love to a privileged few, but offers it to all."

Just as all human beings have one creator, the Pope said, God willed that they would have one savior, Jesus Christ.

“For this reason, we are called always to nourish great trust and hope for every person and his or her salvation,” he said.

“Even those who seem far from the Lord are followed — or better, pursued — by his passionate and faithful love.”

Like the Wise Men, he said, Christians must continue to journey closer and closer to the Lord, attentive to the signs of God’s presence, untiring and courageous.

“Attentive, untiring and courageous — but one thing is missing,” he said. “Walk in the light! And what is the light? The Gospel of Jesus. Always have a Gospel in your purse or pocket to read.”

Media Coverage

FT

Article on a rift among investors over a global campaign that aims to combat [climate change](#) by making fossil fuels as unpopular as tobacco. It states the world's churches have become an arena for the debate over whether to tackle global warming by divesting from fossil fuel

companies or by holding shares and engaging to spur more climate-friendly business models. It reports that the Church of England has opted for engagement, after announcing last month it would use its stakes in [Royal Dutch Shell and BP](#) to urge the companies to cut their carbon emissions and invest more in renewables. While the World Council of Churches, which represents around 560m Christians in 140 countries, has adopted a divestment strategy for its SFr16.7m investment portfolio. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5ca02a4c-8792-11e4-bc7c-00144feabdc0.html?siteedition=uk#axzz3NvPblGO6>

Times

The Bishop of Birmingham, David Urquhart, is co-signatory of a letter to the Times which says this year will provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity as in September world leaders decide on new goals for sustainable development and in December a new climate treaty. The letter states: "Global agreements matter. The millennium development goals helped to halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 per day and enabled impressive gains in primary education and child survival.

We have a long way to go: too many people are still burdened by hunger and disease, too many children do not see their 5th birthday, too many face conflict. We stand together to build a movement for change." <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/letters/article4314623.ece>

Mail

Archaeologists in Jerusalem say they may have found the site where Jesus was sentenced to death. The paper, quoting the Washington Post, says the remains of Herod's palace have been carefully examined and "uneven stone pavement has been identified as fitting the description of the event in the Gospel of John."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2897424/Have-archaeologists-discovered-Jesus-sentenced-death-Site-Herod-s-Palace-matches-Gospel-John-description.html>

Times

Columnist Philip Collins revisits the church where his grandmother was the vergers and where, on Saturday mornings, he would join her to dress the altar. He writes briefly about Epiphany as part of the church calendar in his column about books.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4314776.ece>